

COMMONWEALTH  
PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

# UPDATED BENCHMARKS FOR DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATURES

## SUMMARY BENCHMARKS

*Minimum and Additional Standards for  
Parliamentary Effectiveness*

## About the CPA

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) connects, develops, promotes and supports Parliamentarians and their staff to identify Benchmarks of good governance and the implementation of the enduring values of the Commonwealth. The CPA collaborates with Parliaments and other organisations, including the intergovernmental community, to achieve its statement of purpose. It brings Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff together to exchange ideas among themselves and with experts in various fields, to identify Benchmarks of good practices and new policy options they can adopt or adapt in the governance of their societies.

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These thanks extend to all those CPA Branches who provided feedback on their experiences with the previous edition of the Benchmarks, as well as those resource persons who assisted in the delivery of all Benchmarks Self-Assessments.

For the accompanying User Manual of this document, please access the version available [here](#).

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Cover design and illustrations by Matthew Salik. Cover image, Parliament of Bermuda (where the original 2006 Benchmarks were formulated).



# Introduction

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## Summary Overview

Reinforcing the belief that effective Parliaments are one of the principal institutions of any functioning democracy, the CPA Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures, have for almost 20 years provided a standard and a guide on how a Parliament should be constituted and how it should function. The CPA Benchmarks are therefore fundamental to the wider values and principles of the Commonwealth Charter, which expresses the commitment of member states to the development of free and democratic societies.

The following publication is an outline of the Updated CPA Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures as of 2025. This builds on the 2006 and 2018 versions of the Benchmarks to create a set of standards which meet high levels of good governance and robust parliamentary democracy. These Benchmarks seek to support democracies in overcoming current and future challenges, they also aim to enable Parliaments to achieve, not just the minimum expectations of the Commonwealth citizenry, but to also strive for aspirational excellence.

These updated Benchmarks are the result of widespread consultation over a number of years, and are intended to account for the unique characteristics of Commonwealth Legislatures.

For a full version of these Benchmarks with accompanying explanatory notes and practical guidance, please view the accompanying User Manual.

## Definition of Benchmark Categories

This document classifies Benchmarks as either a “Minimum Benchmark” or as an “Additional Benchmark”.

This categorisation allows this publication to establish and provide both a foundational standard for parliamentary practice whilst simultaneously encouraging aspirational targets that promote continuous reflection and improvement within legislatures.

### “Minimum Benchmarks”

Baseline standards essential to the functioning of an effective, democratic, and inclusive Parliament. They establish core principles and practices that all legislatures, whether Commonwealth or otherwise, should strive to meet as an initial measure of democratic integrity, accountability, and governance.

Adherence to these Benchmarks is considered necessary to fulfil fundamental expectations of parliamentary democracy.

### “Additional Benchmarks”

Aspirational standards for parliamentary practices, beyond the essential requirements outlined in the Minimum Benchmarks, offering Parliaments goals that, while not universally required, represent advanced practices in democratic governance.

These Additional Benchmarks encourage Legislatures to aim for higher standards that reflect emerging best practices, provide a roadmap for their continuous improvement and provide support to Parliaments in responding to 21st-century challenges and opportunities.

# Updated Benchmarks

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## PART 1

### ELECTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES AND APPOINTMENTS

#### 1. Elections Conduct and Rules

##### Minimum Benchmarks

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1.1 Members of the popularly elected House, or Houses, shall be elected by direct universal and equal suffrage in a free and fair secret ballot.

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1.2 Legislative elections shall meet international standards for genuine and transparent elections and be verified as such by a relevant International Observation authority.

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1.3 Term lengths for Members of any popularly elected House shall reflect the need for accountability through regular and periodic legislative elections.

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1.4 There shall be legislation to ensure appropriate campaign finance laws are in place to regulate the manner and extent to which political parties and candidates may receive monetary contributions from individuals and corporations.

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1.5 An independent Electoral Commission or similar authority shall be established for the management of the conduct of elections and its tasks shall include monitoring the election expenses of parliamentary candidates and political parties.

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##### Additional Benchmarks

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1.6 The Legislature should, where possible, ensure that any electoral reform laws being enacted are passed at least a year before the next election occurs (excluding the consolidation of existing laws).

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1.7 At the commencement of the election campaign period, the Legislature should ensure rules are in place which prevent incumbents having unfair access to resources which may disadvantage other candidates.

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## 2. Candidate Eligibility

### Minimum Benchmarks

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2.1 Restrictions on candidate eligibility shall not be based on religion, gender, ethnicity, race, disability, sexuality or any other characteristics that may make up individual or collective identities.

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2.2 Measures to encourage the representative political participation of marginalised groups shall be introduced to encourage improved political participation of these marginalised groups in national democratic processes.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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2.3 The Legislature should ensure that mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate measures that seek to improve political participation of marginalised groups between General Elections.

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## 3. Political Parties

### Minimum Benchmarks

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3.1 Any restrictions on the legality of political parties shall be narrowly drawn in law and should be consistent with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

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3.2 Rules governing public and private funding of political parties and candidates shall be fair, transparent and accountable.

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3.3 The Legislature shall have procedures in place for the formal recognition or registration of political parties which have representation in the Legislature.

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## 4. Incompatibility of Office

### Minimum Benchmarks

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4.1 No elected Member shall be required to take a religious oath against their conscience in order to take their seat in the Legislature and, where possible, the Legislature shall provide elected Members with an opportunity to make an alternative non-religious declaration before taking their seat.

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4.2 In a bicameral Legislature, a Member shall not simultaneously be a Member of both Houses.

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4.3 A Member shall not simultaneously serve in the Judicial branch or as a civil servant of the Executive branch.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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4.4 The Legislature should have legislation, a constitutional provision, or established practice in place that ensures the size of the Cabinet is proportionate to the size of the Legislature as a whole.

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4.5 No elected Member should be prevented from taking their seat based on their religion, gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, or disability.

---

4.6 In circumstances where a jurisdiction has national, subnational or territorial legislatures, and where Legislators may be a member of more than one Legislature, the division of responsibilities should be clearly defined in national law.

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## 5. Resignation and Removal

### Minimum Benchmarks

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5.1 Members shall have the right to resign from Parliament in accordance with processes clearly defined in the Legislature's Rules of Procedure, the jurisdiction's Constitution or any other related parliamentary law.

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5.2 The Legislature shall have provisions relating to the removal of Members which are narrowly defined, restricted and implemented in line with natural justice.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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5.3 The Legislature should have policies and practices in place to assist Members transitioning out of the Parliament (either by personal choice or as a consequence of election defeat).

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5.4 Electoral laws should give provision to allow for the right of recall whereby constituents, in proven instances of serious wrongdoing or dereliction of duty on the part of their elected representative can seek to have them removed from office between General Elections.

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## PRIVILEGES AND PROCEDURES OF THE LEGISLATURE

### 6. Privileges and Immunities

#### Minimum Benchmarks

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6.1 The Legislature's Powers, Privileges and Immunities shall be clearly enumerated in the Constitution and/or equivalent legal framework and be proportionate, reflecting the rule of law, good governance and rights and values of the jurisdiction.

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6.2 The Legislature shall be protected by the freedom of speech immunity, extending to Members within the Legislature. The immunity shall protect persons from legal liability for words spoken or acts undertaken while participating in or directly facilitating the Legislature's proceedings and shall restrict the use of such words or acts by the Judicial branch as evidence in related judicial proceedings.

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6.3 The freedom of speech immunity shall operate to enable the Legislature to carry out its constitutional functions effectively and free from interference or impediment.

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6.4 The Legislature shall have protection against potential misuse of the freedom of speech immunity. References to judicially suppressed or protected information, or to matters awaiting judicial decision, shall be made only in exceptional circumstances and with due regard to the separation of powers between the Legislature and the Judiciary.

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6.5 The Legislature shall have appropriate mechanisms in place for persons to respond to adverse references made to them during the Legislature's proceedings, such as a formal right of reply scheme.

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## 7. Rules of Procedure

### Minimum Benchmarks

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7.1 The Legislature's Rules of Procedure shall reflect and support the actual practice of the Legislature.

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7.2 Only the Legislature shall have the power and authority to adopt and amend its Rules of Procedure.

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7.3 The Legislature's rules, procedures and practice shall be reviewed and, where deemed necessary, updated after every General Election to enhance parliamentary effectiveness and relevance.

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7.4 Changes to the Legislature's Rules of Procedure shall be adopted with near unanimity.

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7.5 The Legislature's Rules of Procedure shall allow Members to raise genuine and succinct points of order for the Presiding Officer to consider and decide upon.

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7.6 The Legislature's rules, procedures and practice shall be readily accessible to Members of the House and to the wider public.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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7.7 The Legislature should coordinate and deliver training for newly elected and returning Members regarding the interpretation and use of the Rules of Procedure after every election and by-election.

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7.8 The Legislature should produce an accompanying Handbook which explains the importance of the Rules of Procedure in regulating how the Legislature conducts its affairs and which is made publicly available to citizens on the Legislature's website.

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## 8. Presiding Officers

### Minimum Benchmarks

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8.1 The Legislature shall select or elect a Presiding Officer pursuant to criteria and processes clearly defined in the jurisdiction's Constitution and/or the Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

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8.2 The Presiding Officer shall maintain order so that the Legislature carries out its functions effectively and Members have full opportunity to participate in legislative proceedings in accordance with the Legislature's Rules of Procedure and established practice.

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8.3 The Presiding Officer shall decide all questions of procedure, and in doing so is guided by previous decisions and practice.

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8.4 Any sanctions (such as orders to leave the chamber) applied to Members in the House shall be proportionate only to the extent necessary to uphold the Presiding Officer's vested authority and unimpeded ability to chair proceedings

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8.5 Rulings made by the Presiding Officer shall be recorded, collated and published in a consistent manner and on a regular basis which are publicly available.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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8.6 The Presiding Officer should have access to a dedicated office providing independent and timely expert advice on legal and procedural matters.

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8.7 The Legislature should have at least one Deputy Speaker to support the work of the Presiding Officer who should be given clear roles and responsibilities.

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## 9. Convening Session and Quorums

### Minimum Benchmarks

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9.1 The Legislature shall meet frequently, in a consistent manner and at suitable intervals sufficient to fulfil its responsibilities.

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9.2 The Legislature shall have procedures in place for calling itself into regular, extraordinary or special sessions.

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9.3 Provisions and qualifying requirements for the Executive branch to convene an extraordinary or special session of the Legislature shall be clearly specified and adhered to.

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9.4 The Legislature shall have rules which stipulate what constitutes a minimum number of Members who must be present throughout the duration of the sitting, the means of verification and procedures for when the quorum is not met.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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9.5 The determination for when the Legislature sits should be made by the parliamentary leadership which should include the Executive and Opposition, and, where relevant, Independent Members.

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## 10. Agenda

### Minimum Benchmarks

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10.1 Members shall be provided with advanced sight of the agenda for the forthcoming sitting day.

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10.2 The House shall be provided with opportunities and mechanisms to decide or modify the proposed business of the House, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.

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10.3 A moderate proportion of the Legislature's time shall be set aside for it to consider business proposed by non-Government and Independent Members by way of dedicated days periodically provided for in the Legislature's sitting calendar.

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10.4 There shall be an annual parliamentary calendar published online to promote transparency.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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10.5 The Legislature should apply flexible and family-friendly hours to its working day or permit hybrid participation to allow for better work-life balance for its Members

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## 11. Debate

### Minimum Benchmarks

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11.1 The Legislature shall establish and follow clear procedures for structuring debate and determining the order of precedence of motions tabled by Members.

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11.2 The Legislature shall provide adequate opportunity for Members to debate any Bill, resolution, or motion brought before them prior to a vote.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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11.3 The Legislature should have the technical and procedural capacity and security protocols to accommodate hybrid participation of Members in parliamentary debates.

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## 12. Voting

### Minimum Benchmarks

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12.1 Plenary debates and votes in the Legislature shall be public.

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12.2 Only Members sitting in a particular House shall vote on issues brought before that House.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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12.3 The Legislature should have the technological capability and security protocols to facilitate remote e-voting under specific and justifiable circumstances.

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12.4 The Legislature should have provisions within the Rules of Procedure to facilitate paired or proxy voting where a Member is unable to attend Parliament, due to care commitments, health issues or other circumstances preventing their attendance.

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## 13. Petitions

### Minimum Benchmarks

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13.1 The Legislature shall have procedures in place to allow for the meaningful consideration of petitions.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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13.2 The Legislature should establish numerical signatory thresholds that oblige the Legislature to debate petitions on the Floor of the House or refer them to a relevant Committee.

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## 14. Records

### Minimum Benchmarks

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14.1 The Legislature shall maintain and publish readily accessible records of its proceedings, in a standard and consistent format.

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14.2 Records of proceedings from the previous sitting shall be made available to Members in advance of the following sitting.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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14.3 Records of proceedings should be maintained digitally and made publicly accessible and easily searchable.

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14.4 Audio and video recordings should be maintained, stored, and owned by the Legislature and restrictions and protocols will be in place to mitigate their unauthorised use or manipulation.

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## 15. The Opposition, Party Groups and Interest Caucuses

### Minimum Benchmarks

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15.1 Laws, regulations or rulings shall clearly set out who should be the Leader of the Opposition and their manner of appointment.

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15.2 The Legislature shall ensure adequate facilities and allocation of resources for all Members of the Opposition, including the Leader.

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15.3 Criteria for the formation of parliamentary party groups, as well as their rights and responsibilities in the Legislature, shall be clearly stated in the Rules of Procedure.

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15.4 The Legislature shall provide adequate resources and facilities for party groups pursuant to a clear, proportionate, and transparent formula that does not unduly advantage the party of Government.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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15.5 Members should have the right to form non-partisan interest caucuses around issues of common concern which are allocated adequate facilities and resources to conduct their work.

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15.6 There should be a women's/gender caucus which should be recognised and provided with appropriate and requisite resources by the Legislature.

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15.7 The Legislature should establish Rules of Procedure for parties and party groups when coalition parties are formally or informally established to ensure fairness and balance on Committees, as well as the allocation of resources and parliamentary time.

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15.8 The Legislature should have provisions in place which clarify the status of Members who leave voluntarily or involuntarily from their political party and who move to another party or become independent.

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### 16. Legislative Function

#### Minimum Benchmarks

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16.1 The approval of the Legislature shall be required for the passage of all legislation, including annual/multi-annual national budgets.

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16.2 The Legislature shall have the power to enact resolutions or other non-binding expressions of its will.

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16.3 The Legislature shall scrutinise secondary, delegated or subordinate legislation including its authority and scope.

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16.4 The Legislature shall provide adequate resources for Members to draft legislation or potential amendments to any legislation tabled in the House.

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#### Additional Benchmarks

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16.5 The Legislature should undertake equality impact assessments with respect to the development of legislation, policies and budgets and publish the subsequent report.

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16.6 The Legislature should encourage the production of explanatory briefing notes to accompany legislation for the benefit of Members.

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16.7 All parliamentary Bills should be available on the Legislature's website for the public to access and the Legislature should ensure that all Acts of the Legislature are publicly available online.

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## 17. Legislative Procedure

### Minimum Benchmarks

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17.1 In bicameral Legislatures, there shall be clearly defined roles for each House in the passage of legislation.

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17.2 The Legislature shall have the right to override an Executive veto on any piece of legislation it has passed.

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17.3 The Executive shall transmit Bills and other documents requiring parliamentary action for timely distribution to Members.

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17.4 Unless under exceptional circumstances, legislation shall not pass through more than one stage of proceedings on a single sitting and any exceptions must be transparent, narrowly defined, and extraordinary in nature.

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17.5 The Legislature shall establish procedures for systematically monitoring the effective implementation and consequences of legislation it has passed.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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17.6 The Legislature should have mechanisms in place to consider draft legislation which shall include sufficient opportunities for the public to offer input.

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17.7 The passing of any emergency legislation should be limited in scope, temporary in nature, and include relevant sunset clause provisions.

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## 18. Legislative Committees

### Minimum Benchmarks

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18.1 There shall be a presumption that the Legislature will refer legislation to a relevant parliamentary Committee, and that any exceptions must be transparent, narrowly defined, and extraordinary in nature.

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18.2 Committees shall scrutinise legislation referred to them and have the power to recommend amendments to the content or scope of that legislation.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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18.3 The Legislature should include provisions in its Rules of Procedure that permit two or more committees to work jointly to scrutinise legislation.

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18.4 Parliamentary Committees should be provided with the scope and necessary resources to undertake post-legislative scrutiny and monitor the implementation and impact of laws passed.

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### 19. Committee Functions

#### Minimum Benchmarks

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19.1 The Legislature shall have the right and sufficient resources to form permanent and temporary Committees.

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19.2 The Legislature's assignment of Members on each Committee shall reflect the political composition of the Legislature.

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19.3 The Legislature shall establish and follow a transparent method for selecting or electing the Chairpersons of Committees.

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19.4 Once established, Committees shall meet regularly in a timely and effective manner.

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19.5 All Committee votes and substantive decisions, as well as the Committee's reasons for them, shall be made public in an accessible and timely manner.

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19.6 Where Committees produce reports, these shall be laid in the Legislature in a timely fashion.

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#### Additional Benchmarks

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19.7 Parliamentary Committees should, where possible and deemed beneficial, conduct a certain proportion of their work away from the Parliamentary Precinct to increase the Legislature's interaction with relevant external stakeholders.

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## 20. Committee Powers

### Minimum Benchmarks

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20.1 Committees shall have the power to summon persons, papers and records, and this power shall extend to inviting witnesses and taking evidence from the Executive branch, including officials.

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20.2 Committees shall have the right and sufficient resources to consult and/or employ experts.

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20.3 Committees shall seek and receive a wide and diverse range of submissions from the public, especially from marginalised groups about the business before them and provide reasonable time for written submissions to be prepared.

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20.4 Committees shall hear evidence in public unless there is good reason to hear particular submissions in closed session.

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20.5 Legislatures shall protect informants, such as whistleblowers or public servants, and witnesses presenting relevant information to Committees about corruption or unlawful activities.

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20.6 Only Members appointed to the Committee, or authorised substitutes, shall have the right to vote in Committee.

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20.7 The Legislature shall be empowered to require the Executive to officially respond to all reports and recommendations published by Committees of the Legislature in a timely manner.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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20.8 The Legislature should have the powers to utilise lay Members as ex officio members of Committees.

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### 21. Oversight Function

#### Minimum Benchmarks

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21.1 The Legislature shall have mechanisms to obtain information from the Executive branch sufficient to exercise its oversight function in a meaningful and timely manner. There shall be clear and effective procedures requiring the Executive to provide timely responses to oral and written questions.

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21.2 The oversight authority of the Legislature shall include, where applicable, effective scrutiny of the military, security and intelligence services.

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21.3 The oversight authority of the Legislature shall include effective scrutiny of state-owned enterprises.

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21.4 The oversight authority of the national Legislature shall include effective scrutiny of compliance with international treaties and obligations, including international human right instruments and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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21.5 The Legislature shall establish an independent Ombudsman, Integrity Commission or similar office, with the mandate to examine complaints made against Government agencies or public bodies.

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21.6 The Legislature shall establish an independent Human Rights Commission, or similar office, with the mandate to protect against human rights violations.

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21.7 The Legislature shall receive annual reports and scrutinise the activities of all independent constitutional bodies, such as Human Rights Commissions, anti-corruption bodies and Ombudsmen.

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21.8 The Legislature shall ensure that independent constitutional bodies receive adequate resources and that the work of such institutions is not subject to political pressure from the Executive.

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#### Additional Benchmarks

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21.9 The Legislature should, wherever possible, make publicly available its reports into the activities of all state-owned enterprises and independent constitutional bodies included in its oversight authority, as well as its jurisdiction's compliance with international treaties and obligations.

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21.10 In circumstances where a jurisdiction has national, subnational or territorial Legislatures, there should be a mechanism in place to enable subnational and territorial legislators to have oversight of the national Executive on matters pertinent to that jurisdiction.

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## 22. Financial and Budgetary Oversight

### Minimum Benchmarks

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22.1 Budgetary approval and scrutiny procedures shall be clearly specified in the Legislature's Rules of Procedure, the jurisdiction's Constitution or other relevant parliamentary legislation.

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22.2 The Legislature shall have a reasonable period of time in which to adequately scrutinise and debate the proposed national budget.

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22.3 The Legislature shall establish active oversight Committees which engage in effective scrutiny of Government expenditures.

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22.4 Oversight Committees shall provide meaningful opportunities for minority or opposition parties and independent Members to engage in their activities.

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22.5 In addition to the draft annual budget, the Legislature shall receive and assess longer-term budget strategies and be informed of the main assumptions that underpin annual revenue and expenditure projections.

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22.6 The Legislature shall receive regular in-year budget reports and an audited annual financial statement from the Executive within 12 months after the end of the fiscal year.

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22.7 The Legislature shall have access to sufficient financial scrutiny resources and/or independent budget and financial expertise to ensure that financial oversight is conducted effectively.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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22.8 The Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee should be a Member of the official Opposition or drawn from an alternative non-Government party. Where this is not possible, by virtue of the composition of the Legislature, the Chair should be a Member with sufficient independence from the Executive.

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22.9 The Legislature should be provided with the scope and resources to undertake gender budgeting when carrying out oversight of executive spending.

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## 23. Auditing Function

### Minimum Benchmarks

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23.1 There shall be an independent, non-partisan Supreme or National Audit Office whose reports are tabled in the Legislature regularly and in a timely manner.

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23.2 The Supreme or National Audit Office shall be provided with adequate resources and legal authority to conduct audits in a timely manner in line with the Lima Declaration of Guidelines on Auditing Precepts.

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23.3 All reports of the Supreme or National Audit Office shall, by default, be referred to the Public Accounts Committee, or a designated Committee, for further report in line with Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (CAPAC) provisions.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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23.4 The Legislature should establish an internal Parliamentary Budget Office to provide its Members with independent expert advice to support their scrutiny of various auditing activities.

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## 24. No Confidence and Impeachment Provisions

### Minimum Benchmarks

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24.1 In bicameral systems, only a popularly elected lower House shall have the power to bring down the Government.

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24.2 The Legislature shall have mechanisms to impeach or censure the Executive branch or express no-confidence in the Government.

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24.3 If the Legislature expresses no confidence in the Government, the Executive is obliged to offer its resignation. If the Head of State agrees that no other alternative Government can be formed, a General Election shall be held in an appropriate time frame that is clearly specified in the jurisdiction's Constitution or any other related law.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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24.4 The Executive Head of Government should be required to come before the Legislature at least once every calendar year to provide Members with an update on the priorities and performance of the Government.

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### 25. Representational Function

#### Minimum Benchmarks

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25.1 The Legislature shall be organised in such a way as to enable the substantive representation of women in its work.

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25.2 The Legislature shall provide all Members with adequate and appropriate resources enabling them to effectively fulfil their constituency responsibilities.

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#### Additional Benchmarks

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25.3 The Legislature should establish formal mechanisms of interacting with external stakeholders, including local government personnel, civil society groups, representatives of youth communities.

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25.4 The Legislature should maintain a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy as part of its broader Strategic Plan, with the express purpose of ensuring that the composition of the administration of the Legislature reflects the wider population within its jurisdiction.

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## 26. Public Outreach, Education and Engagement

### Minimum Benchmarks

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26.1 Opportunities shall be given for public input into the legislative process and committee work, including the annual budget cycle.

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26.2 Information shall be provided to the public in a timely manner regarding matters under consideration by the Legislature.

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26.3 The Legislature shall promote the public's understanding of the work of the Parliament.

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26.4 The Legislature shall identify demographic groups whose perspectives are not well represented in parliamentary decision-making and make concerted efforts to increase their participation.

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26.5 The Legislature shall have an independent website that is publicly accessible and regularly updated to enhance information sharing and promote interaction with its own citizens and the outside world.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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26.6 The Legislature should operate or otherwise substantively support a Youth Parliament or related youth engagement programme to encourage and educate young people within its jurisdiction.

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26.7 The work of the Legislature and the political environment in the related jurisdiction should form part of the educational curriculum.

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26.8 The Legislature should hold Open Days or equivalent which are open to all members of the electorate, who wish to visit the Legislature as part of a Public Engagement Strategy.

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## 27. Media Relations

### Minimum Benchmarks

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27.1 The Legislature shall ensure that representatives of the independent Media are given appropriate access to the proceedings of the Parliament without compromising the proper functioning of the Legislature and its Rules of Procedure.

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27.2 The Legislature shall have a non-partisan Media relations facility that is fit for purpose.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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27.3 The Legislature should produce a companion guide for representatives of the Media to support their reporting of parliamentary activities.

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## 28. Accessibility

### Minimum Benchmarks

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28.1 For formal parliamentary and informal activities, the Legislature shall be accessible and open to all citizens with particular due consideration for persons with disabilities.

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28.2 Where the jurisdiction's Constitution or parliamentary rules provide for the use of multiple working languages, the Legislature shall make every reasonable effort to provide for the simultaneous interpretation of Plenary/Committee debates and translation of accompanying records.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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28.3 The Legislature should carry out full and regular accessibility audits of the Parliamentary Precinct.

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## 29. Freedom of Information

### Minimum Benchmarks

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29.1 There shall be an effective Freedom of Information regime to give the public access to information held by relevant public authorities.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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29.2 The Legislature should establish a formal position with overarching responsibility for coordinating any Freedom of Information requests submitted by members of the public.

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### 30. Parliamentary Governance and Management

#### Minimum Benchmarks

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30.1 The Legislature shall, either by legislation or resolution, establish a corporate body responsible for providing services and funding entitlements for parliamentary purposes and providing for independent governance of the Parliamentary Service.

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30.2 Only the Legislature shall be empowered to determine and approve its own budget.

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30.3 The Head of the Parliamentary Service shall have a form of protected status defined in legislation or in the jurisdiction's Constitution to prevent undue political pressure.

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30.4 The remuneration of the Head of the Parliamentary Service shall be set by an independent body or mechanism.

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30.5 The Clerk of the Legislature shall be an Accounting Officer for the Legislature.

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#### Additional Benchmarks

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30.6 The funding of the Legislature should be through a separate appropriations bill.

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30.7 The Legislature should have an agreed Strategic Plan with related objectives developed and updated at regular intervals and a mechanism of monitoring and evaluation to measure achievement against the Strategic Plan or other goals.

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30.8 The Legislature should have sole control of the Legislative Precinct.

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30.9 The Legislature should have strategies and policies around the use of IT and the application of artificial intelligence with a focus on the protection of personal data.

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30.10 The Legislature should have targeted policies and measures in place to prioritise environmental and sustainable practices such as Paperless Parliaments.

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30.11 The Legislature should undertake regular Gender Assessments/Audits to ensure it is a gender sensitive institution aligned with evolving international best practice.

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30.12 The Legislature should have risk strategies and implementation procedures in place around security, resilience and continuity planning which shall include the provision of physical and cyber security for the Legislature's infrastructure, as well as for Members, parliamentary staff (regardless of their location) and visitors to the Legislative Precinct.

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## 31. Parliamentary Staff

### Minimum Benchmarks

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31.1 The Legislature shall have adequate non-partisan professional staff to support all elements of its operations.

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31.2 The Legislature, rather than the Executive, shall control the Parliamentary Service and determine the terms of employment. There should be adequate safeguards in place to ensure non-interference from the Executive.

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31.3 The Legislature shall draw and maintain a clear distinction between partisan and non-partisan staff.

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31.4 The Legislature shall take measures to ensure that women are represented at all levels of the parliamentary administration.

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31.5 The Legislature shall have adequate resources to recruit the staff needed to effectively fulfil its responsibilities. The rates of pay shall be broadly comparable to those in the wider public service.

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31.6 The Legislature shall have transparent and objective recruitment procedures that should not discriminate in its recruitment of staff on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, sexuality, or, in the case of non-partisan staff, party affiliation.

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31.7 The recruitment and promotion of non-partisan staff shall be on the basis of merit and equal opportunity and with a focus on sustainability and succession planning to ensure the retention of expertise within the Parliamentary Service.

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31.8 The Legislature shall provide regular opportunities for parliamentary staff to engage in professional development activities that help improve their facilitation of the Legislature's business. These opportunities should cover internal activities within the parliamentary administration and external activities with third party organisations.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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31.9 The Legislature should establish a formal Work Experience/Placement scheme for young people considering a future career in the Parliament, providing them with first-hand experience of working directly inside the Legislature.

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## 32. Parliamentary Assistance, Networking and Diplomacy

### Minimum Benchmarks

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32.1 The Legislature shall have the right to seek and receive external development assistance to strengthen the institution of Parliament.

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32.2 The type of assistance, budget and use of development assistance received by the Legislature shall be determined by the Legislature in a transparent and accountable manner.

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32.3 Members and staff of the Legislature shall have the right to receive technical and advisory assistance, as well as to network and exchange experience with individuals from other legislatures.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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32.4 The Legislature should establish a formal Exchange Programme that enables staff of both legislatures to benefit from exchanging knowledge, experience, and best practice.

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32.5 The Legislature should have mechanisms in place to ensure that both Government and Opposition Members have equal and proportionate access to networking and opportunities to attend international gatherings of Members.

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### 33. Remuneration, Benefits and Training

#### Minimum Benchmarks

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33.1 Fair remuneration and reimbursement of parliamentary expenses shall be provided to Members for their service, to ensure that they give priority to parliamentary duties. All forms of compensation shall be allocated on a non-partisan basis.

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33.2 An independent body or mechanism shall determine the remuneration, benefits, and other statutory entitlements of Members with adequate mechanisms for monitoring and disclosing these publicly.

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33.3 The Legislature shall take proactive measures to ensure that newly elected Members are assisted in understanding how the Legislature works and the importance of its Rules of Procedure.

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33.4 The Legislature shall take ongoing steps to assist Members in increasing their knowledge and skills in the effective performance of their parliamentary duties.

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#### Additional Benchmarks

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33.5 The Legislature, in conjunction with an independent remuneration authority, should conduct periodic reviews of its remuneration/reimbursement framework to ensure that it is equitable, commensurate, and fit for purpose.

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## 34. Services and Resources

### Minimum Benchmarks

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34.1 The Legislature shall have adequate physical infrastructure in place that enables Members and staff to effectively fulfil their responsibilities.

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34.2 Members and staff of the Legislature shall have equal access to sufficient research, library, and ICT facilities.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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34.3 The Legislature should have physical and mental health advisory services and facilities to provide support to Members, their staff, and parliamentary officials.

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### 35. Transparency and Integrity

#### Minimum Benchmarks

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35.1 Members shall maintain high standards of accountability, transparency, responsibility, and propriety in the conduct of all public and parliamentary matters including strict adherence to Codes of Conduct, and interest disclosure rules.

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35.2 The Legislature shall approve and enforce Codes of Conduct for Members and for parliamentary staff, including rules on behaviour, conflicts of interest and the acceptance of gifts.

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35.3 Legislatures shall require Members to periodically, fully, and publicly disclose relevant financial and other personal interests.

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35.4 There shall be mechanisms to prevent, detect, and bring to justice Members and parliamentary staff engaged in corrupt practices.

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35.5 The Legislature shall have a published anti-harassment policy, encompassing clear definitions, preventative actions, reporting mechanisms, and disciplinary measures, to ensure a safe and respectful environment for all Members, staff, and the general public.

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## 36. Natural Justice

### Minimum Benchmarks

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36.1 The Legislature shall incorporate principles of natural justice into its Rules and Procedure, and these shall be applied rigorously to all situations where serious allegations are made against named or identifiable persons during the course of proceedings, either in the Chamber or one of its Committees.

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36.2 Members, or others, who are subject to serious charges of contempt of, and offences against, the Legislature shall be accorded due natural justice principles during the whole process of consideration, and any charges are decided on the basis of all properly admissible evidence.

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36.3 Sanctions imposed by the Legislature on Members or other people (for example, fines, or suspensions from attending or participating in further sittings of the Legislature and its Committees) shall be proportionate, fair, and equally applied.

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### Additional Benchmarks

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36.4 The Legislature should establish the position of Ethics Adviser within its parliamentary administration to provide impartial expert advice to the Presiding Officer, Members, and staff on matters relating to natural justice provisions.

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